

Oregon & Washington Safety Alert

Subject: Record Fire Danger and Burning Conditions

Area of Concern: Firefighter Safety

Distribution: AREA WIDE

Issued: 10 August 2005

FIRE DANGER IS HIGH TO EXTREME

Fire Danger indexes are increasing in all predictive service areas in the Pacific Northwest. They are at or above their historic 90th percentile values with many above the 97th percentile level. Fuel moisture in all size classes is at or below seasonal norms. Several areas have gone almost a month without any significant precipitation. Herbaceous fuels are cured over most of the east side. On the west side vegetation is very stressed and would contribute significantly to rapid spread.

EXPLOSIVE GROWTH EXHIBITED

The School Fire in southeastern Washington grew from 150 acres Saturday morning 8/6/05 to over 30,000 acres by Sunday morning. This unprecedented spread occurred in the absence of a significant wind event! Major contributors to the spread were exceptionally dry live and dead fuels; steep, dissected topography; low relative humidity; and heavy fuel loading resulted in additional convective lift that produced long-range spotting and explosive spread

WATCHOUTS

1. Hot, dry, summer weather will continue for several weeks. Expect Fire Danger Indices to worsen.
2. Fuel loading and arrangement is a significant factor in the spread and intensity of fires.
3. Light flashy fuels can readily ignite at virtually all hours of the day and night resulting in rapid fire spread, especially on steep slopes or in windy conditions.
4. Larger fuels ignite and burn easily increasing fire intensity and spotting potential.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Fire managers should insure that all personnel understand the significance of the current conditions. All personnel should review the indicators of intense fires on pages 2 and 3 of the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), and the Severe Fire Behavior Potential Related to Relative Humidity and Fuel Moisture Content on page 65 of the IRPG. This information should be posted and available to firefighters and discussed during in-briefs and shift briefings.

Source: Mike Fitzpatrick - NWCC Predictive Services, Eric Christiansen - BLM Fuels NIFC, Jim Brain – Consultant
Authorized by the Northwest Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

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